

cartographic perspectives

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cartographic perspectives on the news

THE CHANGING POLITICAL MAP OF EUROPE

As syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman recently observed, "This is the year that making history finally became a daily event." The political map of Europe in particular is changing at a dizzying pace. Boundaries that only last year seemed as permanent as an 'iron curtain' now appear as ephemeral as faded ink lines on yellowed paper.

The most impressive symbol of the Eastern European revolution has been the precipitous collapse of the Berlin wall and the impending reunification of the two Germanies. Cracks in the wall began to appear in May 1989 as Hungary opened its barbed wire border with Austria. By the fortieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic in October, 20,000 East Germans had passed through Hungary on their way to West Germany, and thousands more loudly demanded democratic reform in the streets of East Berlin. On hand for the anniversary, Soviet President Gorbachev commented that the fate of reform in East Germany would be decided "not in Moscow, but in Berlin." East German President Erich

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Honecker's hardline regime was soon swept from power on the crest of a wave of public discontent. Under the amused gaze of East German border guards and the glare of western television lights, euphoric Germans from both sides of the wall celebrated the new year with sledges and pickaxes. Bits of the broken wall have become pricey souvenirs. Approximately 150,000 East Germans emigrated to the west through the opened border in the first quarter of 1990, as compared to a total of 344,000 in 1989.

The pace of German reunification has exceeded all expectations. With the assent of the World War II Allies, a treaty signed in Bonn on May 18, 1990 established that the two Germanies would become a single economic entity by July 2. The West German mark was

WILEY'S VIEW



...The Soviets *LEAST* enthralled with the sweeping changes by Democracy..

adopted as the common currency, to be exchanged for East German marks at a 1:1 rate.

As the boundary dividing the two Germanies dissolves, the Soviet republics of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia have taken bold steps to reassert the integrity of theirs. On March 11, Lithuania adopted a new constitution and formally declared independence from the Soviet Union, which responded by imposing an embargo of oil, natural gas and other raw materials shipments in April. Latvia followed with an announcement May 4 of the beginning of a gradual transition to independence. Estonia proclaimed solidarity with Lithuania on May 8 and dropped enforcement of the Soviet constitution without a formal declaration. On May 13, the Presidents of the Baltic states revived a 1934 political alliance and called for full membership in the United Nations. Stalin's 1940 annexation of the Baltic states, while never officially acknowledged by the west, is tacitly accepted. The United States has demurred from recognizing the Lithuanian declaration for fear of further weakening embattled Soviet President Gorbachev.

Already politically threatened by a worsening economic crisis, Gorbachev has (as of this writing)

steadfastly required that Lithuania rescind its declaration. "The Lithuanian people are a wise people," he said, and will realize that Lithuania "needs independence, but within the framework" of the Soviet Union. President Landsbergis has insisted that while the declaration is not negotiable, laws enacted since by the democratically elected Lithuanian parliament may be. Gorbachev warned in public remarks that redrawing the Soviet Union's internal boundaries could lead to civil war. He recently told members of the Communist Youth League, "If we begin to divide up, I'll give it to you bluntly. We'll end up in such bloody carnage that we won't be able to crawl out of it."

Meanwhile, the European Economic Community is moving slowly toward an integrated Europe in which some of the meaning and purpose of national borders may be surrendered. Member nations Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and West Germany have endorsed a plan to adopt a single currency and central banking system by the end of 1992. At a conference in Dublin on April 28, the EEC also set a timetable for (continued on page 42)